UNIT14: KANTIAN CATEGORIES

UNIT STRUCTURE

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14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- learn about the categories. The categories are not inductive generalizations but deduced from the concepts of the 'logical employment of the understanding'.
- know that before Kant, Aristotle is the first philosopher who mentions different categories in his philosophy.
- know certain differences between Aristotle's conception of categories and Kantian categories.
- about the transcendental deduction of categories.
- know the role of transcendental schema in uniting categories with the sensible intuitions.
- know about transcendental imagination.
- learn 'transcendental apperception,'which is the apriori ground of all our concepts.

14.2 INTRODUCTION:

Kant divides transcendental logic into transcendental analytic and transcendental dialectic. In the transcendental analytic, on the one hand, Kant is concerned with explaining the a priori forms and the principles of pure understanding, which make synthetic a priori judgments. Transcendental analytic on the one hand, is chiefly concerned with the following: (I) that the concepts be pure and not empirical; (2) that they belong, not to intuition and sensibility, but to thought and understanding; (3) that they be fundamental and be carefully distinguished from those which are derivative or composite; (4) that our table of concepts be complete, covering the whole field of the pure understanding. Transcendental dialectic, on the other hand, is concerned with exposing the illusion of transcendental judgments and at the same time caution us against being deceived by it. A detailed discussion of transcendental aesthetic has been made earlier. Here, we will discuss in detail only the transcendental analytic, the first part of transcendental logic.

According to Kant, the pure concepts of understanding, which apply apriori to the forms of sensible intuitions, are known as the categories. Kant, however, in the Critique of Pure Reason, does not give any specific definition of categories. According to him, the categories are not inductive generalizations but deduced from the concepts of the 'logical employment of the understanding'.

14.3 ARISTOTLE ON CATEGORIES

Before Kant, Aristotle is the first philosopher who mentions different categories in his philosophy. According to Aristotle, there are ten categories. They are-substance, quality, quantity, relation, place, time, position, state, action and difference. Among these various categories, substance is the central and the other categories are predicable to substance and consequently have relative importance. Aristotle says that Substance in the truest sense of the word is that which is neither predicate of a subject, nor present in a subject.

Kant agrees with Aristotle that the knowledge of an object is possible only through categories. Kant also retains some of the categories, which are already mentioned by Aristotle. They are-substance, quality, quantity, relation, position and state.

Kant appreciates Aristotle's contribution for bringing the categories in epistemology, yet he points out certain short comings of Aristotle's categories. We can point out certain differences between Aristotle's conception of categories and Kantian categories. For Aristotle, An object is the amalgamation of form and content, and is independent of the human mind; for Kant, an object is synthetic a priori in which the a prioriaspects, i.e., the forms, cannot exist independently of the human mind but they can exist independent of the synthetic aspects, which constitute the content. Apart from this, Aristotle regards space and time as categories. But for Kant space and time are the forms of sensible intuitions.

Besides Aristotle and Kant, in the analytical tradition, Russell and Strawson also develop the role of categories. There appears to be four main theories of categories, first, Aristotle's metaphysical theory of categories, second, Kant's epistemological theory of categories, third, Russell's theory of types of categories and fourth, Strawson's descriptive theory of categories. However, we shall not discuss Russell's and Strawson's analysis of categories here.

14.4TRANSCENDENTAL DEDUCTION OF CATEGORIES

According to Kant, there are twelve categories. For him, judgments and categories are relative terms, because corresponding to every judgment there is a category. Kant shows the table of categories in the following way-

Table of Categories

I

Of Quantity

Unity

Plurality

Totality

II

Of Quality

Reality

Negation

Limitation

III

of Relation

of inherence and subsistence

of causality and dependence

of community

IV

of Modality

Possibility-Impossibility

Existence-Non-existence

Necessity- Contingency

According to Kant, Categories are the original pure concepts of synthesis that the understanding contains within itself a priori. He divides the categories into two groups- mathematical categories and dynamical categories. The first groups of categories are concerned with the objects of intuition. The second groups of categories are concerned with the existence of these objects. Kant again says that, the former have no correlates; these are to be met with only in the second group.

While explaining the role of categories, Kant shows the relation among all three sub-divisions of each main class. Itmay be observed that the third category in each class always arises from the combination of the second category with the first. However, the third category is not a derivative, primary concept of the pure understanding.

Kant shows the inter-relation between the different categories in this way, allnessortotality is just plurality considered as unity; limitation is simply reality combined with negation; community is the causality of substances reciprocally determining one another; lastly, necessity is just the existence which is given through possibility itself.

Kant distinguishes metaphysical deduction of categories from the transcendental deduction of categories. In the metaphysical deduction of categories, Kant argues that the concepts are derived from the experience and reflection upon experience. But in the transcendental deduction, concepts are not derived from experience but they relate a priori to all possible objects in experience. Kant showing the relation between metaphysical and the transcendental deduction of categories states that the explanation of the manner in which concepts can thus relate a priori to objects is their transcendental deduction; and from it he distinguishes empirical deduction, which shows the manner in which a concept is acquired through experience and through reflection upon experience, and which therefore concerns, not its legitimacy, but only its de facto mode of origination.

Kant only insists on the transcendental deduction of the categories and not of the empirical deduction. In his words, plainly the only deduction that can be given of this knowledge is one that is transcendental, not empirical. In respect to pure a priori concepts the latter type of deduction is an utterly useless enterprise which can be engaged in only by those who have failed to grasp the quite peculiar nature of these modes of knowledge.

Kant says that knowledge arises only when sensible intuitions are brought under the categories of understanding. However, sensible intuition and categories of understanding are heterogeneous. The sensible intuitions have an empirical content, whereas, the categories of understanding devoid of any empirical content. Therefore, there is no common between sensible intuitions and the categories of understanding. Kant remarks, but pure concepts of understanding being quite heterogeneous from empirical intuitions, and indeed from all sensible intuitions, can never be met with in any intuition.

14.5 TRANSCENDENTAL SCHEMA

Question arises- how does the categories, which are non -empirical are applied to the sensible objects? Kant says that there must be some third thing that makes the application of the categories of understanding to the appearances possible. This mediating representation must be pure, that is devoid of any empirical content. It must be on the one hand, intellectual and on the other hand, it must be sensible. He says this mediating representation is transcendental schema.

Kant says that the concept of time as the transcendental schema and can serve as the mediator between the categories of understanding and the sensible intuitions. He chooses the concept of time as the transcendental schema because of its dual nature, that it is sensible and a priori. Being an a priori form of sensible intuition, it is pure and universal and therefore it is homogeneous with the categories. At the same time, time is contained in every empirical representation of the manifold. Therefore, it is homogeneous

with the empirical representations. Thus an application of the category to appearances becomes possible by means of the transcendental determination of time, which, as the schema of the concepts of understanding, mediates the subsumption of the appearances under the category.

Moreover, Kant prefers the concept of time as the transcendental schema and not the space, because time is the internal form of intuition, therefore it is more universal, more abstract than space and it is applicable to all mental events (as well as physical events). The categories of understanding and ideas occur on mental level and therefore space is not involved. Space is the form of outer sense and therefore only external objects pass through it, time is the form of inner sense through which not only external objects but the internal objects also pass.

Kant says that the schema of each category contains and makes capable of representations only through determination of time. He gives explanations as to how the transcendental schema, through the concept of time, makes the representations possible. He argues, the schema of magnitude is the generation (synthesis) of time itself in the successive apprehension of an object. The schema of quality is the synthesis of sensation or perception with the representation of time; it is the filling of time. The schema of relation is the connecting of perceptions with one another at all times according to a rule of time-determination. Finally, the schema of modality and of its categories is time itself as the correlate of the determination whether and how an object belongs to time. The schemata are thus nothing but a priori determinations of time in accordance with rules.

The role of the transcendental scheme is to act as a mediator between sensible intuitions and the categories of understanding. Through transcendental schema, the subjective conditions of thought can have objective validity, that is, can furnish conditions of the possibility of all knowledge of objects. Kant says, the schemata of the pure concepts of

understanding are thus the true and sole conditions under which these concepts obtain relation to objects and so possess significance.

14.6 TRANSCENDENTAL IMAGINATION

In order that knowledge is possible, sensibility and understanding must unite. But the problem arises as to how these dual faculties unite to give us knowledge. Sensibility has the a priori forms of space and time and understanding has categories. Categories are really the ways, peculiar to understanding, in which we combine our representations in objective judgments. Experience, in the humanly significant sense, is the result of arranging the manifold of sense according to pure principles of order and relation, i.e., the categories. But mere sense by itself cannot give us a manifold which requires a synthesis, and sense, which is passive, cannot effect a synthesis. Kant holds that synthesis of manifold of representations is the result of the power of imagination. He explains the synthesis of imagination is the act of putting different representations together, and of grasping what is manifold in them in one [act of] knowledge. Synthesis is the mere result of the power of imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever, but of which we are scarcely ever conscious.

Kant states that three factors are necessary for the pure synthesis of the a priori sensibility. They are the apprehension of representations as modifications of the mind in intuition, reproduction in imagination, and their recognition in a concept. These three syntheses are in fact aspects of one synthesis. They are explainedbelow-

a) The synthesis of Apprehension in Intuition: Kant says all our representations, being modifications of the mind belong to inner sense. Time is the form of inner sense. Therefore, all our representations are ordered and related in time. Every intuition presents us with a manifold. This manifold can be regarded as a manifold, only in as far as the mind distinguishes the time in the sequence of impressions. This intuition,

which arises through the manifold, can be brought together into unity through a synthesis. This is the synthesis of apprehension.

(b) The Synthesis of Reproduction in Imagination: Kant says that the synthesis of apprehension in intuition takes the need of the synthesis of reproduction in imagination in order to give us the complete representation of an object. The synthesis of imagination, which serves as the a priori ground of a necessary synthetic unity of appearances make their reproduction possible. Without this synthesis of the reproduction in imagination, we cannot experience any object.

(c) The Synthesis of Recognition in a Concept: The synthesis of apprehension and the synthesis of reproduction are not sufficient in giving us the unity of representations, which constitute the knowledge of an object. When a representation is reproduced in imagination, it must be recognized as identical with what we have already apprehended. Unless we recognize the reproduced parts to be the same as what we have apprehended before, such reproduction will be useless.Kant states, in that case, the manifold of the representation will not form a whole, because it has lack the unity, which only consciousness can give to the representations. Kant here adds the third synthesis, that is, the synthesis of recognition. This recognition entails the identification of the representations that are first apprehended with those that are latter reproduced. Every recognition identifies some concepts. A concept is the consciousness of the representations that are already produced.

According to Kant, categories of understanding in order to systematize the chaotic order of representations require synthesis of imagination. But the categories of understanding and imagination for synthesizing unconnected representations cannot function without assuming a subject of knowledge. This is so because it is the subject minds capacity to synthesize through imagination. Kant here speaks of a unitary self, i.e., the unity of apperception.

14.7 TRANSCENDENTAL UNITY OF APPERCEPTION

Kant states that there is a transcendental ground of the unity of consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of all our intuitions and all objects of experience. This transcendental ground, according to Kant, is the transcendental apperception. He says that transcendental apperception precedes all experience, and yet it makes all experience possible. Transcendental apperception is the a priori ground of all our concepts. Without this unity of pure consciousness, no concepts are possible.

Thistranscendental unity of apperception is formed out of all possible appearances, according to laws. This is not possible if the mind is not conscious of the identity of function that synthetically combines all appearances in one knowledge. The original and necessary consciousness of the identity of self is also the consciousness of the synthesis of all appearances. He says that we do not find the order and regularity in the appearances,rather we introduce them. The unity of apperception, therefore, is the transcendental ground of all appearances in one experience.

Kant says that all representations have relations to empirical consciousness and all empirical consciousness has a necessary relation with transcendental consciousness. It is necessary in our knowledge situation that all empirical consciousness belong to one transcendental consciousness, that is, the consciousness of 'I' or me. This abiding and unchanging 'I' (pure apperception) is the basis of all our representations. Thispure apperception is the highest principle in the whole sphere of human knowledge. This consciousness of 'I' or the thinking 'I' expresses the act of determining my existence. I am conscious of my own existence. The consciousness of my existence is given by self-intuition. It is conditioned by sensible a priori form, that is, time.

Kant says that the synthetic unity of consciousness is both objective and subjective conditions of all knowledge. The transcendental unity of apperception is that unity through which all the manifold given in an intuition

is united in a concept of the object. It is therefore entitled objective, and must be distinguished from the subjective unity of consciousness, which is a determination ofinner sense- through which the manifold of intuition for such [objective] combination is empirically given.

The pure apperception must relate to the pure imagination in order to make their function more intelligible. A pure imagination, Kant says, which conditions all a priori knowledge is one of the main function of the human soul. According to him, by its means we bring the manifold of intuition on the one side, into connection with the condition of the necessary unity of pure apperception on the other.

Kant distinguishes transcendental apperception, which is pure, original and unchangeable consciousness from empirical apperception. Empirical apperception is always changing. Consciousness of self is inner sense or inner perception is empirical. Therefore, such consciousness of self is always changing. He again says that in the transcendental apperception, all representations are united together. It is only when I grasp the different representations as the one consciousness, I call them all these representations, as one and they are all my representations. But in an empirical intuition, representations are not united togetherand they are diverse. They do not have any relation to the identity of the subject.

In Kant's opinion, synthetic unity of apperception is the subject of knowledge of the phenomenal world, which itself cannot be the object of knowledge. This is so because unlike representation of phenomenal object, it cannot be given in sense-experience and categories of understanding will not be applicable to it. Therefore, it is unknown and unknowable. The unitary self or the unity of apperception is related to the categories of understanding and sensible intuition through the faculty of imagination. What will be the case if one tries to know the 'unitary self', if one tries to apply the categories of understanding to it? In Kant's opinion, any attempts to know the 'unitary self' will lead to the 'paralogisms', which are formally invalid

conclusions. Paralogisms are fallacies which come out when certain conclusions are drawn from the judgment 'I think.' They are four in number-

1. That the soul is substance.
2. That it is simple
3. That it is person
4. That it is in relation to possible objects in space.

Kant expounds these paralogisms in order to show that the unity of apperception is unknown and unknowable.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1.What is category?

Q2.What are the two division of transcendental logic?

Q3.Before Kant, which philosopher has discussed about categories?

Q4.How many categories are there, according to Aristotle?

Q5.How many categories are there according to Kant?



14.9 LET US SUM UP

- The pure concepts of understanding, which apply a priori to the forms of sensible intuitions, are known as the categories. Categories are not inductive generalizations but deduced from the concepts of the 'logical employment of the understanding'.
- Before Kant, Aristotle is the first philosopher who mentions different categories in his philosophy. According to Aristotle, there are ten categories. They are-substance, quality, quantity, relation, place, time, position, state, action and difference. Among these various categories,

substance is the central and the other categories are predicable to substance and consequently have relative importance.

- According to Kant, there are twelve categories. For him, judgments and categories are relative terms, because corresponding to every judgment there is a category.

- According to Kant, Categories are the original pure concepts of synthesis that the understanding contains within itself a priori. He divides the categories into two groups- mathematical categories and dynamical categories. The first groups of categories are concerned with the objects of intuition. The second groups of categories are concerned with the existence of these objects.

- Kant distinguishes metaphysical deduction of categories from the transcendental deduction of categories. In the metaphysical deduction of categories, Kant argues that the concepts are derived from the experience and reflection upon experience. But in the transcendental deduction, concepts are not derived from experience but they relate a priori to all possible objects in experience.

- Kant says that the concept of time as the transcendental schema and can serve as the mediator between the categories of understanding and the sensible intuitions.

- Kant holds that synthesis of manifold of representations is the result of the power of imagination. He explains the synthesis of imagination is the act of putting different representations together, and of grasping what is manifold in them in one [act of] knowledge. Kant explains the role of Synthesis of Imagination.

- Kant states that three factors are necessary for the pure synthesis of the a priori sensibility. They are the apprehension of representations as modifications of the mind in intuition, reproduction in imagination, and their recognition in a concept.

- Kant states that there is a transcendental ground of the unity of consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of all our intuitions and all objects of experience. This transcendental ground, according to Kant, is the transcendental apperception.

- Transcendental apperception is the a priori ground of all our concepts. Without this unity of pure consciousness, no concepts are possible.



14.10 FURTHER READING:

1) Burnham, Douglas and Young Harvey Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2007).

2) Cassirer, H.W., Kant's First Critique: An Appraisal of the Permanent Significance of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, (London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1961).

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7) O'Connor, D.J., (ed.),A Critical History of Western Philosophy, (New York: The Free Press,1964).

8) Scruton, Roger Kant, (London: Oxford University Press, 1982).

9) Wilkerson,T.E. Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: A Commentary for Students,(London: Clarendon Press, 1976).

10) Wood,Allen Kant, (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

13.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Ans. to Q No. 1: According to Kant, the pure concepts of understanding which apply apriori to the forms of sensible intuitions, are known as the categories.

Ans. to Q No. 2: Transcendental analytic and transcendental dialectic.

Ans. to Q No. 3: Aristotle.

Ans. to Q No. 4: Ten.

Ans. to Q No. 5: Twelve.

14.12 MODEL QUESTIONS:

Q1. Distinguish between metaphysical and transcendental deduction of categories. Discuss transcendental deduction of categories.

Q2. What is transcendental schema?

Q3. Why time is considered as a transcendental schema? Describe

Q4. Discuss the function of transcendental imagination.

Q5. Explain transcendental unity of apperception as the subjective ground of our cognition in detail.

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